DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 405 030 JC 970 136

AUTHOR Adams, Jeffrey B.; Eppolito, Caterina
TITLE The Road to Understanding the Self Is Paved with Yellow Bricks.
PUB DATE Mar 96
NOTE 10p.; In: Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Undergraduate Teaching of Psychology (10th, Ellenville, NY, March 20-22, 1996); see JC 970 128.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; *Films; Higher Education; *Instructional Innovation; *Learning Activities; Self Concept; *Social Psychology; Student Motivation; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Wizard of Oz

ABSTRACT

To maintain student interest and increase student understanding of material in a course on the social psychological study of the self, a classroom exercise was developed that uses the film, "The Wizard of Oz," as a metaphor for the self. In the exercise, students are asked to observe the film's main character and the events that take place in her life with the goal of using their observations as illustrations of concepts of the self covered in the course, such as motive, self-knowledge, individual differences, and self-related processes. After viewing the film, students are encouraged to analyze the film individually and are then assigned to small groups or brought together as a whole for discussion. The only parameter established for student responses is that each claim made must be accompanied by a justification well founded in the constructs of self covered in the course. While entertaining and engaging, the exercise also serves to review the major theories and concepts covered in the course, move students beyond surface recognition of these concepts toward a deeper understanding of their complexities, and work toward an initial awareness of the interplay between the concepts. Course handouts, providing a list of concepts covered in the course and questions to help guide discussions on the film, are appended. (TGI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 405 030

The Road to Understanding the Self is Paved with Yellow Bricks.

Jeffrey B. Adams

Saint Michael's College

Caterina Eppolito

Saint Michael's College

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. R. Levine

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Undergraduate Teaching of Psychology (10th, Ellenville, NY, March 20-22, 1996)

JC 970 136

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

It is an easy task to attract students to a course on the social psychological study of the self thanks to the topic's inherent appeal. However, maintaining interest through coverage of the complex and highly empirical concepts of the area can be a struggle. This presentation discusses one exercise developed to maintain student involvement while increasing their understanding of the course material. The exercise is built upon treating the classic story, "The Wizard of Oz," as a metaphor for the self.

One of my favorite courses to teach is entitled "Advanced Topics in Social Psychology: The Self." Not only is the course subject a strong interest of mine, it also seems to inherently appeal to students as it is highly requested during registration. Either because of this interest, or despite it, I'm not sure which, the course illustrates well the themes of the 1996 Teaching of Psychology Conference, the struggles between content and process, and depth and breadth.

The social psychology of the self offers a wealth of information thanks to blossoming interest over the past twenty years. And because the area is social psychology, it tends toward the strongly empirical. I have found, therefore, that if I concentrate solely on disseminating content in all it's complexity, this material can be as dry as my front lawn when it suffers through a nine week drought, which, of course, leads to disaster--bored, uninvolved, and disappointed students. On the other hand, it is imperative that I cover all the foundational concepts if I am to attain the goal I set for the class: the development of a personality model, albeit a fledgling model, based on this material.

I have experimented with many teaching techniques and exercises in my struggle to maintain student interest and motivation while preserving my course goal. What I would like to describe is one exercise I use in this course to which students have responded well. While entertaining and engaging, the exercise serves multiple purposes: a) reviewing all the major theories and concepts covered to that point, b) moving students beyond surface recognition of these concepts toward a deeper understanding of their complexities, and c) working toward an initial awareness of the interplay between the concepts.

The exercise can actually take on many forms, and how it is conducted depends on the course and the instructor's preferences. However, the basic premise remains the same no

matter what form is selected—we are to look at a classic film, not as a form of entertainment, but as a metaphor for the self. I ask students to observe the film's main character and the events that take place in her life with the goal of using their observations as illustrations of the concepts we have studied. The film is "The Wizard of Oz," and the character is Dorothy.

Having set this general goal, I distribute a list of the major concepts we have covered in the class (see Appendix 1) and we spend a few minutes in quick review. Next, I provide a handout (see Appendix 2) that describes a few ground rules for the exercise, and that also provides a list of questions to "kick start" students' analyses. Assured that students fully understand the exercises's intent, and with lists in hand, we begin to watch the film version of "The Wizard of Oz" during class.

The first programmatic difficulty to this exercise, as you might have anticipated, is that the movie's length prevents full viewing in one class session. Options I have considered are using two classes to view the film, shortening the film by presenting only the "overtly relevant" sequences, designating an evening time when I show the remainder of the film, and making a copy available for students to finish watching the film at their convenience. It is, of course, possible for students to simply rent the videotape at a local store, an alternative that has the added advantage of allowing repeated reviewing of film segments.

To encourage individual participation and greater idea generation, I ask students to work alone while making their first attempt at analysis. Later, I assign students to small groups so that they can pool their ideas through brainstorming. It is, of course, possible to skip working with small groups and bring the class together as a whole to discuss their interpretations.

As I stated earlier, how formally or informally the exercise is treated depends on the

instructor's judgment and preferences. Intrinsic interest in and enjoyment of the exercise seems enough to motivate many students to carry through on their analyses without tying their work to an external evaluation. Using a more formal approach, it's possible to require that written accounts at both the individual and group analysis levels be turned in as part of a course grade.

The number of possible applications of self material to The Wizard of Oz can keep even the most motivated student searching for more, and the flexibility of interpretations of characters and events allows room for student creativity. In fact, the only parameter I establish for student responses is that each claim they make must be accompanied by a justification for the claim, a justification well founded in the self constructs we have covered.

Appendix 1

Self-Related Concepts Covered in Class

Motives

- control
- liking the self
- being liked by others

Individual Differences

- public self-consciousness
- private self-consciousness
- self-monitoring

Self Knowledge

- self-concept
- self-schema
- self-esteem
- self-efficacy
  - outcome expectancy
  - outcome value
- self-consistency theory
  - actual/own
  - actual/other
  - ideal/own
  - ideal/other
  - ought/own
  - ought/other
- undesired self

Self-Related Processes

- self-presentation/impression management
- self-perception
- social comparison theory
- self-discrepancy
- self-enhancing illusions
  - self-serving attributional bias
  - unrealistic optimism
  - unrealistic self-image
  - illusion of control
  - selective importance
  - selective exposure
  - selective attention
  - selective memory
- self-handicapping
- self-disparagement
- learned helplessness

Appendix 2

The Wizard of Oz: Dorothy's Adventure to Self-Unification

What's this exercise all about? Well, I'd like you to watch the movie, "The Wizard of Oz." Yes, it's a fun movie and I hope you enjoy it. But don't watch it solely for entertainment. Watch it as if it were written as an elaborage illustration of the self literature we've been studying.

First, a few ground rules:

- Your goal is to apply the self-related concepts in the distributed list to the 'Wizard of Oz," conjuring up as many examples of each as your imagination will allow. The number of possible applications seems endless, so feel free to be as creative as you'd like.
- There are no right or wrong answers, per se. At the same time, each claim you make should be accompanied by a justification supporting it—a justification well founded in the self constructs we have covered.
- I suggest you approach the movie using the time sequence as given. In this way, Dorothy's journey remains intact.
- This exercise is not meant to be a literary analysis of "The Wizard of Oz," nor does it suggest that Lyman Frank Baum intended his story to have any relation whatsoever to the self literature. Sometimes an exercise is just an exercise.

I'd like to start by setting the scene, giving you a kick start as it were. I'll begin with a proposal, and follow this with questions for your consideration. Please use these only as *initial* guides. In other words, don't stop your analysis with answers to these quesitons.

My proposal:

It's hard to miss the fact that the film begins and ends in black and white, while Dorothy's adventures in Oz are filmed in color. What do you think's going on there? A camera malfunction? The crew ran out of money while filming? The director's just trying to be artsy? Too practical. Think psychology of the self.

To get you to the mindset of this exercise I'd like to propose that the black and white scenes represent mundane reality, Dorothy's unexciting, boring, teenage life, and all scenes portrayed in color are events taking place solely in Dorothy's imaginative unconscious. In addition, I propose that since Oz is a product of Dorothy's unconscious, all the characters found within represent some aspect of Dorothy. Yes, they can mirror people found in her everyday life, but since they are her fantasies, consider them projections of her wishes and desires, fears and anxieties.

On to the guiding questions.

Appendix 2

DOROTHY'S BORING REAL WORLD

- Who is Dorothy from Dorothy's point of view? What role(s) does she enact? What public image does she portray in the first scenes on the farm? What appear to be her desires, her frustrations?

- What are others' images of and expectations for Dorothy?

- What do you learn about Dorothy's hopes and dreams from the song "Somewhere Over the Rainbow?" Does her private self match her public self?

- How does Dorothy react to the threat of Miss Gulch, and what does this tell you about her?

- Have you made any speculations yet about Dorothy's level of general self-esteem or of her level of general self-efficacy from these opening scenes?

- What did it take to begin to move Dorothy toward self-unification?

DOROTHY'S FANTASY WORLD

- What does Dorothy say she wants, right from the beginning of her time in Oz? What self-motive does this represent?

- What parts of Dorothy's self might be represented by Oz's cast of characters?
  - -Glinda, the Good Witch of the North?
  - -The Wicked Witch of the East?
  - -The Munchkins?
  - -The Scarecrow?
  - -The Tin Man?
  - -The Cowardly Lion?
  - -The Wizard?

- Consider Dorothy's journey down the yellow brick road. She begins at Munchkin Land, travels through the woods, and emerges into the poppy fields ("You're out of the woods, you're out of the dark, you're out of the night. Step into the sun, step into the light, and open your eyes..."). What's going on here in relation to her self-unification? What do these situations represent to Dorothy?

- What does the Emerald City represent to Dorothy? What goes on there? What does she expect to have happen there? What happens to Dorothy and her companions before they are allow to visit the Wizard?

- The Wizard keeps himself hidden during Dorothy's initial visit, and he denies her wishes, sending her out to prove herself. What might be going on here?

* Who are the more powerful characters in Dorothy's fantasy? Who are the weaker? Who triumphs in the end, successfully overcoming trials and tribulations?

* The Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion each *claim* to missing an important aspect of their personality. Do their actions match their words?

* What's the significance of Toto's discovery when the troop returns to visit the Wizard?

* Why is it important that the Wizard float off into the air in the end, and that he be replaced by Glinda?

* What's the significance of what Glinda reveals to Dorothy? What are those glass slippers all about, anyway?

BACK TO A HAPPIER, MORE FULFILLING REALITY

* How has Dorothy changed since being knocked unconscious?